



# State of South Carolina

## Office of the Governor

MARK SANFORD  
GOVERNOR

POST OFFICE BOX 12267  
COLUMBIA 29211

June 18, 2007

The Honorable Robert W. Harrell, Jr.  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
Post Office Box 11867  
Columbia, South Carolina 29211

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House:

I am hereby vetoing and returning without my approval H. 3254, R-158.

This legislation would require any school that has received an absolute performance rating of "Unsatisfactory" on its most recent report card to offer an orientation class, which parents shall attend.

Recent school performance data make it clear that we need substantive changes to our educational system. In the last five years, we've seen the revenue committed to K-12 education increase by 34 percent, from \$5.5 billion in 2001 to \$7.3 billion in projected local, state and federal revenue for 2006-07. Over the same period, the state's national ranking on key education performance indicators such as SAT scores, ACT scores and high school completion rates remain constant – *dead last*. The growth in the number of "Unsatisfactory" schools (as a percentage of all the state's public schools) has risen dramatically in recent years – from 6 percent in 2001 to 13 percent in 2006. Nearly 10 percent of the public school students in our state are now enrolled in "Unsatisfactory" schools.

It's laudable that legislators are trying to find ways to reduce the number of "Unsatisfactory" schools in South Carolina. To their credit, the bill's authors recognize that improving our schools will involve changing the culture of low expectations that allows many parents to be passive participants in the education of their children. Unfortunately, however, this bill would do little to accomplish that worthy goal. In fact, it may create the appearance of progress and increased accountability where none actually exists.

By requiring all parents with children enrolled in "Unsatisfactory" schools to attend an orientation, the bill offers the illusion of requiring parents to take a more involved role in their children's education. There are no penalties for parents who do not attend these orientations, however, which makes it extremely likely that only the parents of high-achieving students will



The Honorable Robert W. Harrell, Jr.  
June 18, 2007  
Page 2

attend, while the parents who need to attend won't. Unless the General Assembly is willing to provide transportation to and from meetings, compensate parents for time away from work, provide child care for the parents with more than one child, and hold parents accountable for putting the information provided to good use, the only people attending these orientations will be the people who need them least.

The fact is you can't turn apathetic parents into involved and concerned parents with the passage of a bill. You can, however, create incentives for parents to become more involved – and that's precisely what this legislation doesn't do. The orientations mandated by this bill could, for instance, involve the granting of K-12 educational scholarships – funds that would empower parents, regardless of household income, to act on the data that is presented in these orientations. Absent such measures as this, I am forced to conclude that the present legislation would do little to address the problems its authors rightly intended to remedy.

For the reasons stated above, I am vetoing H. 3254, R-158 and returning it without my approval.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mark Sanford', with a stylized 'M' and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Mark Sanford